

REMARKS OF HON. JOHN L. DAWSON,

IN THE HOUSE OF

REPRESENTATIVES

by John Littleton Dawson

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REMARKS

OF

HON. JOHN L. DAWSON,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MARCH 3, 1853,

On the bill for the relief of the widow of Commodore Decatur, and the captors of the Frigate Philadelphia.

MR. SPEAKER: I move to take up Senate bill No. 265, for the relief of the captors of the frigate Philadelphia, and ask the House to indulge me whilst I make a brief statement of the history and merits of this claim. The bill makes compensation to the surviving officers and crew of the little ketch Intrepid, for signal and gallant services rendered in the month of February, 1804, who entered in the night the harbor of Tripoli, and under the very guns of the castle of the Bashaw, boarded the frigate Philadelphia, then a captured prize in the possession of the Tripolitans, cleared her decks, killing twenty of her crew in a close fight, drove the balance into the sea, then fired the vessel, by which she was burnt to the water's edge, and made their escape without the loss of a single man. This gallant act was conceived by Stephen Decatur, and executed by him and his gallant crew with singular fidelity, resolution, and courage. The history of this affair is as brief as the achievement was brilliant; and I shall therefore detain the House but for a moment in referring to it. After the close of the Revolution, and in the beginning of the present century, our navy was greatly reduced in the number of its vessels-of-war; they were in a dismantled condition, and numbers of the officers and crews were disbanded. As a consequence of our defenceless condition upon the sea, spoliations were committed upon American commerce; and nowhere was piracy so bold and reckless as in the Mediterranean. For a time we enjoyed the friendly protection of the British, Swedish, and other friendly powers, until withdrawn from commercial rivalry, when the government of Tripoli, in May, 1801, made an open declaration of war against the United States.

The government of the United States, prior to being informed of this declaration of war by Tripoli, had sent a squadron into the Mediterranean for the protection of American commerce, which remained there until the fall of 1803, when the frigate Philadelphia, while in chase of a Tripolitan vessel, stranded off the harbor of Tripoli, and in that condition contended gallantly against the powerful batteries of the citadel until, the tide falling, the ship settled, was captured, and afterwards carried into Tripoli as a prize. Commodore Bainbridge, his officers and men, made prisoners, were confined in the prisons and dungeons

of the city. This disaster was touching to the pride and spirit of our navy, and it was agreed that something must be done. In the mean time, Commodore Preble, in command of the *Constitution*, had passed the Straits of Gibraltar and took command of the squadron. Decatur suggested to Commodore Preble his plan for the recapture of the frigate, and on the 31st of January, 1804, he received orders to carry his purpose into execution. The crew of *Decatur* consisted of three lieutenants, seven midshipmen, one surgeon, and sixty-two seamen and marines, all of whom were volunteers in the enterprise. On the third day of February, this gallant band left the harbor of Syracuse, in Sicily, and against adverse winds, upon a doubtful sea, and still more doubtful enterprise, succeeded in entering the harbor of Tripoli, boarding the ship, clearing her decks, fully rescuing her, then destroying the vessel by firing her, and escaping by the light of the conflagration without the loss of a single man. This daring deed shone forth then, as it does now, an illustrious instance of heroic achievement; one that will redound to the credit of the American navy, and in all times to come prove as imperishable as the pages of American history.

There is no portion of the globe that has furnished so many battle-fields, or where history has recorded so many instances of heroic daring, as that which is washed by the waves of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic; yet there is none that for bold conception, energetic, heroic, and successful execution, will compare with that of *Decatur* and his gallant associates. The result was of incalculable advantage to the nation. It not only caused the African pirates to quail before the terrible energy, skill, and courage of our sailors, but it secured the liberation of the captives, it abolished tribute, it encouraged our commerce, and secured an honorable peace. The very order of Commodore Preble indicated the hazard and responsibility of the enterprise. It was, "to enter that harbor in the night, board the *Philadelphia* and burn her; and in order to prevent alarm, to carry all by the sword." The order was executed under a heavy fire from the shipping and batteries. Commodore Preble, in his official despatch detailing the achievement, says of the captors, "that their conduct in the performance of the dangerous service assigned them, cannot be sufficiently estimated. It is beyond all praise."

The proposition, Mr. Speaker, of providing a reward for these gallant men and their representatives has engaged the attention of Congress since 1824. *Decatur*, I believe, fell and died in 1822. Though great difficulty has been found in adjusting the mode of distributing the reward, none has ever been experienced in admitting the abstract justice of the claim. Though not technically embraced by the law which provides prize money to the captors of an enemy's ship captured, and then burned and destroyed, yet this case of the capture of a ship once our own, by an officer who volunteered to perform a desperate and skilful enterprise, is infinitely more entitled to our regards than the ordinary cases embraced by the law of prize, from which class of cases, however, it does not differ in principle. Congress seems to have taken this view of the justice of the claim, for in every instance where an investigation has been had, and a report made, either in the Senate or House of Representatives, its abstract justice has been recognised and acknowledged.

General Jackson, in his message of December 8, 1829—his first message to Congress—recommends that the claim be paid. Five times has it passed the Senate, and ten times been favorably reported upon in the House of Representatives, and it would seem that the tardy and uncertain action of Congress, like the “law’s delay,” amounted to a “denial of justice.” I trust that it will be delayed no longer. It is a claim full of merit and full of justice. Its passage will make provision for the widows and descendants of men who really did the State some service. Decatur, Lawrence, Bainbridge, Morris, and McDonough, are names illustrious in American history.

The widow of Commodore Decatur, I am informed, resides within this district in absolute poverty. I think that Congress should endeavor to make cheerful a fireside so long desolate by the neglect of a government that owed her husband so much. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is true that the nearer we approach the source of organized power the less sympathy we experience, the greater the neglect we discover. This case does not stand alone, nor am I surprised that the settlement of the claim has been so long delayed, when I remember that eight years since, in an idle stroll, I saw the remains of Decatur in the vault at Kallorama, exhibiting all the evidences of neglect,—the coffin decayed—his ashes exposed to the eye—not a lineament discernible. A silver plate bearing the inscription of Stephen Decatur marked the coffin, whilst the remnant of a silken glove covered all that remained of the hand that had defended so gallantly the rights and honor of the country. But national injustice and neglect will not endure forever. I remember well that but a short time afterwards the national spirit arose as if from a common impulse, and the remains of Decatur were removed from the grove of Kallorama to his native place, the city of Philadelphia. The spirit, the feeling, the patriotic ardor that marked their reception into the city of Philadelphia, and the procession to their last burial-place, was equalled only by that which characterized the return of the great conqueror from his prison-grave to the city of Paris, the home of his early life and the theatre of his glory. I trust, Mr. Speaker, that the national spirit will again arise, and that we will pass this bill and do justice to the widows and children of gallant men, all of whom, with the exception of but one, have gone to their graves. I would be glad, then, even at this late hour in the hurried moments of legislation, if it could be taken up, considered, and passed.

REMARKS

OF

HON. JOHN L. DAWSON,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 10, 1854.

On the death of Henry A. Muhlenberg.

MR. SPEAKER: It is, sir, with no ordinary emotion that I rise to notice the melancholy event which has just been announced. As associated with the deceased in the representation on this floor of the people of Pennsylvania, and standing to him in the relation of personal and intimate friendship, I feel that I am but discharging the last painful duty.

Henry A. Muhlenberg, as has been well remarked, could boast of an ancestry of eminent distinction. The brother of his grandfather, Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg, was the first speaker chosen to preside over the House of Representatives of the United States under the present constitution. Joseph Hiester, his maternal grandfather, was among the early governors of Pennsylvania. His father, Henry A. Muhlenberg, long a distinguished member of this body, was afterwards chosen by General Jackson the representative of his government to the court of Vienna; and after discharging with high credit to his reputation the duties of that responsible position, he was, shortly after his return to Pennsylvania, nominated to the highest office known to her constitution.

It will be fresh, sir, in the memory of many who now hear me, how, with the prospect of being carried triumphantly to the chief magistracy of that honored commonwealth, the father was stricken down by the hand of the same invisible enemy which now, on the threshold of a public career, and in the bright morning of life, has prostrated the son.

The deceased, sir, was a man of high character, of inflexible integrity, of polished education and manners, and with a mind richly stored with solid and practical information. It was conceded by all who knew him that he would have been a most invaluable member of this body. True, he had represented his native county—the ancient county of Berks—in the Senate of Pennsylvania, and had shown an ability which promised much for the future. Although comparatively a stranger in this body, his death will cast a gloom over every portion of his native commonwealth.

As a husband and a father his happiness was complete; and it is with feelings of sympathy, the most heartfelt, that we recur to the images of the devoted wife and little boy—an only child—watching anxiously

and hopefully by the bed of the stricken sufferer, soothing by their presence his dying moments, and rendering the last sad tribute of affection.

Sir, it is a solemn thing to die. When we close our eyes for the last time upon the objects of our affection, and the bright light of the morning—to feel to know that when the portals of the tomb close upon all that pertains to this perishing mortality, the spirit has taken its flight to “that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns!” The column which will mark his grave may serve to perpetuate by its inscription the memory of his virtues, but the desolation of his own home nothing can supply.

When we contemplate, Mr. Speaker, the domestic woe, as well as the public loss, which an event so sudden and overwhelming occasions, we cannot but feel, with a painful sense of its reality, the uncertain tenure of our mortal existence. But yesterday, and I saw him within these marble columns, full of life and spirits, participating in the organization of this House, wearing modestly the honors of his trust; and to-day, numbered with the dead! It is in the providence of God to create and to destroy. The honored and the lowly crumble alike before his power. A few short years, and the national representation now seated around me will follow in the path of our departed friend, and the grave becomes a common receptacle.

I second, Mr. Speaker, the resolutions which have been offered by my colleague.

REMARKS

OF

HON. JOHN L. DAWSON,

AT

TAMMANY HALL, NEW YORK CITY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1852.

In answering to your call, fellow-citizens, it is perhaps well to remark, that it is the duty of every democrat, not entirely unaccustomed to public speaking, to freely contribute his aid in giving a direction to public sentiment. In a western man—residing at the western base of the Alleghanies, and at the head of the great valley of the Mississippi, where its waters first break from the mountain—it seems almost like presumption, here in Tammany Hall, where the council-fires of liberty and democracy are always burning brightly, to make the effort. It requires something more than modesty to attempt to add anything to what has been so well and so eloquently said by the distinguished gentlemen who have preceded me. The one (General Cass) ripe in years and acquirements, and distinguished for his statesmanship, enjoys a fame limited only by the confines of civilization. His services to his country and his party will brighten the pages of his country's history. The other, (Judge Douglas,) the young senator from Illinois, the architect of his own fortune, and who, by the force of energy and intellect, has attained high distinction in the Senate, whilst his name, already in the morning of his life, is familiar to his countrymen from the Aroostook to the Pacific. It is true, as he has said, that the democracy of New York, as well as of Pennsylvania, has something to atone for in the history of the past, whilst much is expected from each in the future. We are rejoiced that the great democratic party of New York stands out once more in bold relief to the national view, united and thoroughly organized for the coming contest. It seems incredible that any portion of the democratic party of New York ever flinched in a contest for principle; whilst the union of the party now will go far to wipe out the memory of the fact. New York—one of the old thirteen in the cause of the Revolution, and proud of her revolutionary battle-fields—is, by position, association, and all the glorious recollections of the past, democratic in all her tendencies. In times past, she has done much to secure the ascendancy of democratic principles, and in shaping democratic policy. It was the vote of New York, in 1800, cast in the House of Representatives of the United States, that elected Mr. Jefferson, and thus gave permanent recognition to the doctrines of the great apostle of American liberty. In that trying and eventful

contest, the defeat of Aaron Burr, by the vote of New York, was the death blow to the federal party. From that day until the present, the democratic party, with but three exceptions—the election of Mr. Adams by the House of Representatives, in 1814, and the election of military chieftains in 1840 and '48—has been successful in every contest for the Presidency; while its principles have made permanent progress, and, like the rays of light, illumine every mountain and every valley, not only elevating the masses of this country, but inspiring with hope and promise the down-trodden millions of Europe. In union there is strength, and in strength there is victory. Let us profit, then, by the admonition, and especially by the lessons taught by experience. In the coming contest, Pennsylvania will do her duty; she will be true to herself, and I cannot doubt that she will cast her vote for Pierce and King, for the party is united. In 1848, although defeated in Pennsylvania by a slight defection upon the borders of New York, and by the portable troops that were thrown into the city and county of Philadelphia, the great democratic party of the Keystone State moved in solid phalanx to the charge. In that memorable contest we cast for the regular nominees of the democratic party a greater vote than we gave for Polk and Dallas, in 1844. In Pennsylvania, we acknowledge no leaders beyond the pale of the party, and it is our pride and our boast that we contend alone for the *principles* of our faith. In 1848, we contended zealously for the triumph of those principles, and in their defence fell, at the last moment, disabled in the engagement, yet by no means conquered. The defeat was but temporary, for principles are immutable. It was Mr. Clay who said that “truth is inevitable, and public justice certain.” The result of the election in 1848 was an illustration of this truth, for the principles of the democratic party *did* survive, like a battlement upon the ocean, defying the tempest and the lash of its angry waves. The triumph of the opposition was not only an empty triumph, but it was one fraught with evil. After the inauguration of General Taylor, a policy had to be agreed upon in the organization of the newly-acquired territories. So diversified was public expectation, that an accommodation was sought in the recommendation of the policy of *non-action*.

The popular mind recoiled at suggestions so weak, so impracticable, and so pregnant with anarchy. Congress presented the spectacle of a nation rife with civil feuds and bordering upon dissolution. When the administration saw the difficulties with which they were surrounded, and heard the storm which they had raised raging in the capitol, they were compelled to retrace their steps; and no sooner was General Taylor in his grave, than President Fillmore, with Webster upon one arm and Crittenden upon the other, followed by the remainder of the cabinet, abandoned the policy of non-action as abortive and impracticable, stepped upon the republican platform, and leaned for support and protection upon the doctrines of Lewis Cass. The doctrines of the Nicholson letter, the doctrine of non-intervention, were recognised as the true part of statesmanship, and were adopted as the basis of the compromise—a compromise that restored quiet to a distracted people, and has since been received as the olive-branch of peace. These events, gentlemen, are now matters of history, and in their review the demo-

cratic party relies with confidence upon the enlightened judgment of public opinion. In 1848, the cry of military glory supplied the place of an avowed policy, and, with our own dissensions, proved the passport to power. The sequel I have described, and hold it up as a warning for the future. In 1824, Mr. Clay, then in the full vigor of intellect and matured statesmanship, uttered a fearful warning against the danger of converting military chieftains into civil rulers. The party of which he was the great leader and champion, from Maine to Georgia, joined in the denunciation. They averred that history was philosophy taught by examples, and appealed with confidence to its instructive pages for the lessons they contain.

Yet Mr. Clay himself lived to witness these admonitions, so eloquently and fearfully uttered by him, and so fully endorsed and echoed by his party, afterwards disregarded by that party, and himself immolated and sacrificed, by the nomination of a mere military chieftain, then in command of the army, and fresh from the fields of foreign conquest—a nomination which Mr. Webster declared was “not fit to be made.” After Mr. Clay had grown old, “weary and worn,” in the service of the party into which he had breathed life, and hope, and vigor, and become, as it were, canonized, the last political intelligence that filled his ear was the announcement of the nomination, by the Whig convention, of a military chieftain, the very head of the American army; not because General Scott had high qualifications, or had the slightest experience in the schools of civil policy, but simply because he had attained the rank of a major general, and worn with credit, upon the field of battle, the uniform of his country. There is scarcely an instance upon record when great military captains have failed, when within the scope of their power, to subvert the civil authority, and, at the sacrifice of liberty, to plant themselves upon its ruin. Julius Cæsar was one of the greatest generals of ancient times, and cherished a kinder regard for the welfare of the people than any captain of his age. He had done much for Rome, extended her boundaries, rendered illustrious the Roman arms, and added renown to the Roman name. Yet his conquests changed the ambition of the patriot, till finally it knew no restraint, acknowledged no superior. The Rubicon formed no barrier to the advance of his column, for they crossed its waters, and passed the gates of the seven-hilled city; Cæsar himself demanding of Metellus the keys of the Roman treasury; and thus, by a union of the sword and the purse, he struck down the liberties of his country. Look at the history of modern Europe, and its pages are filled with a recital of revolutions for liberty misdirected, and finally defeated by the treachery of military leaders, who, made arrogant by conquest, seldom failed to convert the sword of the patriot into the sceptre of the despot. Look at Poland, for near a century bleeding under military despotism, the result of her military spirit, and the treachery of her military leaders. Look at Hungary, fired with the spirit of liberty, and struggling almost with superhuman energy for its possession; yet one of her greatest captains brought her back to the yoke of Austria, from which Kossuth had freed her. Look at France, struggling for freedom since the revolution of 1789, dotting Europe with her battle-fields, and, at this very moment, shame-

fully betrayed and sacrificed to the military despotism, not of an imperial Cæsar, but to his mere shadow—the faint echo of his departed glory. Such is the peculiar debauchery wrought in the public mind of a nation once addicted to hero-worship, that it loses the power of using its own judgment, and, with it, the power of self-government. The history of the whig party is a history of hero-worship, as well as of inconsistencies. In 1848, in their desire for the power and patronage of the government, in addition to the cry of military glory, they sought to prejudice the public mind against the exercise of the veto power, one of the most conservative and valuable provisions in the federal constitution. There is no department of the government where a limitation is more required than upon legislation. That limitation is to be found in the careful, judicious, and prompt exercise of the veto power, and upon this point the whig party have now surrendered. General Scott, in his letter of acceptance, avows that he will exercise it. In 1848, the whigs cried aloud for a protective tariff; yet in 1852, when they were forced, for the first time, to make a declaration of their creed, they gave protection the go-by as the obsolete policy of a by-gone day.

The patriots of the Revolution, in their brightest as well as darkest hours, when contending with the power of England upon the sea and upon the land, relied for success upon the justice of their cause. May not the democratic party rely upon the justice of *their* cause with equal confidence, and with an equal assurance of success? To the principles and policy of the democratic party we can trace the foundation of this government, as well as its progress and power—a progress in all the elements of industry, enterprise, improvement, commerce, and navigation, unequalled in the history of nations. It was a democrat who drew the Declaration of Independence. It was a democrat who draughted the Federal Constitution, an acknowledged model of a republican government, so compact and perfect in its structure, so nicely and perfectly balanced in all its parts, forming a Union of States, and acting upon them like the great central attractive power of the sun upon the planetary system, securing a steady motion and ample protection to each and all of them in their proper spheres. It was a democrat who advocated and urged the policy of the purchase of Louisiana, by which new States and Territories have been added to the confederacy—and the free navigation of the Mississippi. It was a democrat who advocated the policy and secured the purchase of the Floridas; thus making perfect our boundaries and military defences in the south. It was democratic policy that secured the annexation of Texas, that resisted the aggressions of the Mexican government, and in defence of our national honor and national rights, pushed the conquest until our western boundaries were extended to the shores of the Pacific. It was the democratic party which delivered the country from the influence, danger, power, and corruption of a national bank—which established the independent treasury, by which the revenue of the government has since been promptly collected, safely deposited, and promptly paid over—which checked and finally arrested the system of internal improvements by the general government—a system which, unequal in its operation, and pregnant with State jealousies and discordant interests, would have exhausted the national treasury, and laid broad and deep the foundation of national

bankruptcy. It has been the policy of the democratic party to extend our commerce, to encourage emigration, and to make this the land of the free and the asylum of the oppressed. The unprecedented prosperity of the great city of New York—with her great commercial avenues now crowded with strangers from every State of this Union, and from every quarter of the civilized globe, with unlimited evidence of wealth and prosperity, with her castles and spires reaching high into the heavens, with a thousand ships floating on the beautiful rivers that wash her boundaries, and a thousand sails crowding her magnificent harbor, the busy theatre of life and action, and inviting to its commercial and peaceful waters the ships of every nation and the productions of every clime—is traceable, in a great measure, to the genius, enterprise, and intrepidity of a distinguished democrat. It was De Witt Clinton who effected a connexion of the waters of the Hudson with those of Lake Erie, by which the trade of great inland seas, as well as of the vast regions of the northwest, was secured to the city of New York. De Witt Clinton was a democrat, true to himself, true to the obligations of his party and his country; and whilst the great canal, which bears his name, will forever stand a living monument of his genius, patriotism, and enterprise, it will pour into the city of New York a trade which, in connexion with her foreign commerce, will cause her to advance in wealth and population, and in the extension of her limits, until she will have equalled, if not surpassed, the city of London. How, then, can any patriot hesitate to give to the democratic party and its nominees his cordial support? It is the party of freedom and of progress. Its principles find their origin in the best feelings of the human heart.

The election of Franklin Pierce will secure the ascendancy of these principles, their recognition as the great and true basis of legislative action. Franklin Pierce stands forth as their acknowledged champion and exponent. Franklin Pierce was nominated by the Democratic National Convention with singular unanimity, and his nomination has been received everywhere with satisfaction. Duty requires that we should give it a cordial and undivided support. Franklin Pierce is the descendant of true revolutionary stock, a man of high and commanding talents, but of modest pretensions and little aspiration; yet the keen discernment and partiality of his fellow-citizens have elevated him to high and distinguished positions. He could voluntarily withdraw from the Senate to the quiet home of his native hills; yet, in the hour of national difficulty, he could quit the quiet and comforts of that home, to march into a distant land, to share its battles and faithfully perform his part in the changeful drama of a soldier's life. His career and history is a fruitful commentary of the influence of freedom and free institutions upon the native powers and energies of the mind, whilst his election to the highest office in the gift of a free people will furnish an additional illustration of the justice and equality of republican institutions.

Of Col. King I need say but little. His history is written upon the legislative records of his country for the last quarter of a century. A man who can live that long in the contests of legislation, and then receive the endorsement of his party in a National Convention, is a democrat well tried and worthy of the highest honors of the republic.

We have but one duty to perform, and that is to secure their election. We must do it by organization, energy and action. There is not a cloud to be seen above the political horizon as large as the prophet's hand to discourage us. Maine and New Hampshire will stand firm in the east; whilst we have more than an equal chance for the votes of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Jersey. The whole south, with scarcely a solitary exception, will cast their votes for Pierce and King. The great west, from the Ohio to the Mississippi, will march up in solid phalanx to the rescue. Pennsylvania will resume her honored position as the keystone of the democratic arch; whilst the democracy of the nation will look to the great Empire State to lead the van and make the triumph complete.

SPEECH
OF
HON. JOHN L. DAWSON,

On the 4th of July, 1854,

IN INDEPENDENCE SQUARE, IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOW-CITIZENS: However familiarized by frequent recurrence the occasion which calls us together, the patriot can never contemplate it with feelings of indifference. So pregnant with momentous consequences to the world have been and still continue the events which are recalled by this day's observance, that memory and imagination are alike fired in dwelling upon the past and shaping the future. It is not my purpose, however, in answering to the call with which I have been honored by your partiality, to intrude upon your patience but a very few suggestions, perhaps not uninteresting, to which the occasion gives rise.

And in the first place, I cannot omit at this time a reference to that recent event, perhaps the most important in your civic history—in consequence of which you stand before the world to-day a city of greater magnitude and promise than any return of this anniversary has yet beheld you. Appropriate for the day which hallows in our affections the Union of the States is a word of congratulation upon the union of your municipalities. Auspicious of good for your future may be the act of your consolidation!

The leading and honorable part taken by Philadelphia in the formation of our confederacy was a consequence of her territorial position not less than her superiority in numbers, and the intellectual and moral character of her population; and if her energy and enterprise, guided by wise counsels, have raised her to a position inferior to none of her sisters, doubtless the same energy, the same skill, the same judicious expenditure of capital, the same generous spirit of rivalry, with an infinitely greater variety of resources and industrial pursuits, will continue permanently in the advance, in all the elements of municipal prosperity, the city of your attachments. At this moment, excepting

London, the largest manufacturing city of the world, and the natural market for the greatest deposits of coal and iron upon the globe, she is urging the extension into the farthest recesses of the great region west of those nerves of iron—those veins and arteries of intercourse—which, while promoting a vigorous and healthful circulation between the city and rural districts, will furnish the surest basis of a great and permanent external commerce. But Philadelphia, as the metropolis of Pennsylvania, is destined to a greatness which can be measured only by that of the State of whose wealth and resources she is the exponent.

Turning a moment to the old Commonwealth, what find we among her sister States comparable with her? With a happy position in respect to climate, which, while severe enough to impart energy to her inhabitants, is yet mild enough to present Nature in her most interesting and agreeable phases, her landscape presents every variety of beauty and grandeur; and while politically the balance-wheel of the confederacy, her position territorially is one of the most commanding importance. Her eastern border washed by the waters of the Delaware, and touching at one extremity upon the great lakes; penetrated by the noble Susquehanna and its north and west branches, by the Juniata, by the Alleghany and the Monongahela; her surface a tissue of railways and canals, she holds at the same time upon the west the keys of the great valley of the Mississippi. With the finest coal-fields in the world, her eastern Atlantic slope has a market limited only by the seaboard, while that upon the west extends to the Gulf of Mexico. The Alleghany range, which divides her eastern and western portions, is really a mountain of iron, covered with exhaustless forests of valuable timber, and whose soil even is richer than a great portion of New England. It is also pertinent to the occasion to remark, that upon these lofty summits the patriot, casting his eye eastward and rejoicing in the commercial greatness of the nation, and westward in her agricultural wealth, cannot but feel impressed with the conviction that here, in these impregnable fortresses of Nature, the liberties of his country will find their last entrenchments.

I have referred to the great lines of inter-communication between the Delaware and the Ohio. But similar works are everywhere in progress. Tunnelling the mountains, or following the valleys in their serpentine course, they form, together with the canals, a complete network, interlacing your whole Atlantic slope; while the same iron arms are reaching out towards the lakes to grasp a portion of the trade of those inland seas, or piercing the most distant and inaccessible portions of the State to draw forth from each, to this great mart, its peculiar products.

But little inferior to New York in square miles of surface—greatly superior to her in domestic resources—in the character of her population she boasts a similar descent, and has the same retrospect of revolutionary memories; the commonwealth of Penn inviting to settlement, by its foundation in deeds of peace, in charity, tolerance, and brotherhood, not alone the English, but Germans of superior character, and the adventurous and enterprising of other European States found

here a chosen retreat. In the words of the lamented bard, who wrote so well that he has left us to regret that he wrote so little—

“For here the exile met from every clime,
And spoke in friendship every distant tongue;
Men from the blood of warring Europe sprung,
Were but divided by the running brook.”

And here,

“The blue-eyed German changed his sword to pruning-hook.”

The patriotism of this varied population has demonstrated itself upon many a blooded field. While Pennsylvania presents in Fort Mifflin and Braddock the earliest scenes upon which the Father of his Country exhibited his youthful prowess, her gallant sons crossed the Delaware and participated in nearly all the battles of the Revolution till its final and triumphant close.

While the States of the great basins drained by the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence have advanced with many strides in the career of progress; while Ohio with her two millions, Indiana and Illinois with their respective millions; while Michigan, and Wisconsin, and Missouri, and Iowa, have all been brought under cultivation, and are pouring their abundant products into the market of the world; while Louisville and Cincinnati, Detroit and Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco, have sprung into great centres of trade and civilization, which the beginning of the present century knew not at all, or only as villages, Pennsylvania has lost none of her importance. Virginia and Kentucky, and the southern States of the “Old Thirteen,” if they do not show a proportionate advance, have sent annually their migrating streams to build up the States of the West and South; and while on the great prairies the corn-tassels wave to many a son of the Carolinas and Virginia, the cotton-bolls whiten many a field upon the Arkansas, the Red river, and the Trinity. In the mean time Pittsburg has become the great workshop of a valley with fifty thousand miles of boatable navigation; and Philadelphia, while contributing to an untold extent to the growth of the younger members of the Union, has come to embrace within her limits more than half a million of happy people, and, in her present freshness and vigor, seems but just ready to launch forth upon a new career.

But let us look at Pennsylvania in another point of view. We find she is the first State west of the Hudson—yes, west of New England—that established a system of common schools. Her attempts at a system of popular education, almost coeval, indeed, with her colonial origin, became completely successful under the administration of Governor Wolf; and now a stream of knowledge is borne into every valley and every mountain defile, and purifies every breeze that visits her vast extent. Colleges, academies, female seminaries, are found in every county in the Commonwealth; while every township, and, indeed, almost every cross-road, presents its common-school-house, furnishing education for thousands of children, and reminding us of the beautiful expression of the Irish orator: “Who knows but among those little inmates there may be some mind wrought of the finest

mould, and stamped with the patent of the Deity!"—some mind that, thus cultured and fostered, and ripened in the spirit of republican freedom, may yet sway the civil destinies of this country, or, in its future conflicts, may lead the armies of the nation to battle and to victory.

Who, then, would not be a Pennsylvanian? [Cheers.] Who does not feel proud of his lineage and his native home? In reviewing our past history, from the time Penn first entered the waters of the Delaware, and the smoke of his Indian cabin first curled above the tall forest-trees which stood where this beautiful city now stands, through the long train of illustrious incidents which crowd the pages of her history, who does not feel his heart glow with pride that his lot has been cast within the limits of such a Commonwealth? [Cheers.] The mind, indulging in such a retrospect, knows nothing of the feelings of Marius while musing amid the ruins of Carthage. No signs of sluggishness are here, or incipient decay; but all is life, energy, prosperity, and progress.

Nor do we find aught to dim these bright anticipations when we look abroad. Glancing for an instant at our mother-land, we see that she has grown great by the force of her position and as a maritime power. Illustrious in her long line of classic literature, and in the profound ability of her statesmen, in the splendid triumphs of her arms, and the brilliant achievements of her navy, the nations of Europe have quailed before the power of England, and the limits of her empire are now beyond the setting sun. Yet the young America—even now in the morning of her national existence—has proven more than her equal upon the battle-field—has struck down the cross of St. George in triumph upon the ocean; whilst her statesmen will compare proudly with Chatham, Fox, Burke, and their illustrious compeers. Her superior in the general intelligence and enterprise of her people—her equal in all the elements of national strength and prosperity—in the race of commercial greatness she will soon hold the trident of the ocean, and command the trade of the world. In view of the rich prizes which the future offers, the position of Pennsylvania is one of marked prominence. The "Keystone State"—her honored appellation—is destined to be still more expressive of her position and advantages than at present; and in a more distinguished degree than ever will she form the shining mark of the confederacy.

We are now, Mr. President, in the full enjoyment of the heritage of the Revolution; and casting our eyes to the other side of the Atlantic, we see that the nation from which we chiefly derive our origin, and from which we won our independence, is now, as one of the allied powers, engaged in resisting the extension of despotism. Belgium, which so long figured in history as the battle-field of Europe, is to be so no longer. It is not upon Paris that the allied armies are now marching; but, with Paris in the alliance, they are marching upon the Danube; for at this time French and English cannon are heard in the mountains of the Balkan, while their naval guns are sending the funeral-cry over the troubled waters of the Euxine, and along the shores of the Baltic.

While these events are passing, the peace, the progress, and prosperity of this country are unexampled in the history of nations.

She stands out as a beacon-light for every continent, and a star of hope for every people. Very different, indeed, have been the principles upon which States have been founded, and upon which they have risen to dominion. Cæsar sought to distinguish his country by universal empire. Napoleon, imbibing the same spirit, saw no barrier in the Alps, the sands of Lybia, or the snows of Russia. England, with a policy not less broad, has placed her ambition in territorial aggrandizement—in the extension of her industrial resources and nautical triumphs; while the countrymen of Washington have sought permanence and fame by institutions founded in justice—by the glorious example of enlightened liberty, and regard for equality of rights.

While the nations of Europe will all suffer by the existence of the war in which they are participants, our course will be still upward and onward. Our internal resources receiving a fuller development, our enterprise tempered; our heretofore unlimited credit brought to the test of sober reality—with a healthful and necessary adjustment of balances, indispensable to a sound condition of trade—the energies of the nation stimulated by the great diversion of industrial force in England, France, and other countries, we shall also obtain the carrying trade of the Baltic and Black seas.

The features and the colors of the picture thus drawn it is in our power to preserve distinct and vivid. It is incumbent on us to allow no sullyng hand to tarnish a single ray that gilds the shield of our federal Union; and then if an enlightened public opinion shall keep pace with the development of our physical resources and our growth in all the elements of wealth and power, our national existence may be perpetuated as long as the Chesapeake, the Delaware, the Hudson, and the rivers of New England, shall pour their waters into the Atlantic, there to mingle in the gulf stream with the Mississippi and its thousand tributaries.

I cannot conclude, Mr. President, these imperfect remarks without again referring to the locality in which we are assembled. Myself from a distant section of the State, I know well the pride which every Pennsylvanian feels in the greatness of Philadelphia. But, distinguished by her institutions of learning and benevolence, by the integrity and enterprise of her merchants, by her men of professional eminence, by her great extent and elegance, and by her love of the arts, she is justly the pride of the whole country.

We should not suffer it to be forgotten that here, in this very city, Franklin found a theatre for the exercise of his extraordinary genius. Here, as a printer, he became the fabricator of his own fortune; as a patriot he wrote, counselled, and struggled for the independence of his country; and here as a philosopher he disarmed the lightning. Here Godfrey invented the quadrant, by which the mariner, on the pathless ocean, is enabled with accuracy to determine his position. Here West taught the canvass to reveal the eye of fire, the form of beauty, and the living landscape. Here, upon the waters of the Delaware, Fulton began those experiments in steam which resulted in the perfecting of the greatest of human inventions; whose mighty fruits are

now seen in the steamers which are crossing the ocean, defying wind and wave—which are vexing every sea, and threading the rivers of every continent. And here Rittenhouse found the earth too limited a sphere for his genius, and the glass conducted him to the heavens, where his philosophy had full scope amid the splendor of a thousand worlds. Within the city of Philadelphia—in that ancient and honored building under the shadow of whose walls this mighty concourse of free-men are now assembled—American freedom had her birth; and she is the last spot in the confederacy where that freedom will find a grave. True to the constitution and the Union of the States—"sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish"—she will be the last to yield either.

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